

## CHAPTER 8D. FLASHING-LIGHT SIGNALS, GATES, AND TRAFFIC CONTROL SIGNALS

### Section 8D.01 Introduction

#### Support:

Active traffic control systems inform motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians of the approach or presence of trains, locomotives, or other railroad equipment at highway-rail grade crossings.

A composite drawing (see Figure 8D-1) shows a post-mounted flashing-light signal (two light units mounted in a horizontal line), a flashing-light signal mounted on an overhead structure, and an automatic gate assembly.

#### Option:

Post-mounted and overhead-mounted flashing-light signals may be used separately or in combination with each other as determined by an engineering study. Also, flashing-light signals may be used without automatic gate assemblies, as determined by an engineering study.

#### Standard:

The meaning of flashing-light signals and gates shall be as stated in the “Uniform Vehicle Code” (see Sections 11-701 and 11-703 of the “UVC”), which is available from the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances (see Page i for the address).

Location and clearance dimensions for flashing-light signals and gates shall be as shown in Figure 8D-1.

When there is a curb, a horizontal clearance of at least 0.6 m (2 ft) shall be provided from the face of the vertical curb to the closest part of the signal or gate arm in its upright position. When a cantilevered-arm flashing-light signal is used, the vertical clearance shall be at least 5.2 m (17 ft) above the crown of the highway to the lowest point of the signal unit.

Where there is a shoulder, but no curb, a horizontal clearance of at least 0.6 m (2 ft) from the edge of a paved or surfaced shoulder shall be provided, with a clearance of at least 1.8 m (6 ft) from the edge of the traveled way.

Where there is no curb or shoulder, the minimum horizontal clearance shall be 1.8 m (6 ft) from the edge of the traveled way.

#### Guidance:

Equipment housings (controller cabinets) should have a lateral clearance of at least 9 m (30 ft) from the edge of the highway, and where railroad property and conditions allow, at least 7.6 m (25 ft) from the nearest rail.

If a pedestrian route is provided, sufficient clearance from supports, posts, and gate mechanisms should be maintained for pedestrian travel.

When determined by an engineering study, a lateral escape route to the right of the highway in advance of the highway-rail grade crossing traffic control devices should be kept free of guardrail or other ground obstructions. Where guardrail is not deemed necessary or appropriate, barriers should not be used for protecting signal supports.

The same lateral clearance and roadside safety features should apply to flashing-light signal and automatic gate locations on both the right and left sides of the roadway.

#### Option:

In industrial or other areas involving only low-speed highway traffic or where signals are vulnerable to damage by turning truck traffic, guardrail may be installed to provide protection for the signal assembly.

### Section 8D.02 Flashing-Light Signals, Post-Mounted

#### Standard:

The flashing-light signal assembly (shown in Figure 8D-1) on the side of the highway shall include a standard Crossbuck (R15-1) sign, and where there is more than one track, a supplemental Number of Tracks (R15-2) sign, all of which indicate to motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians the location of a highway-rail grade crossing.

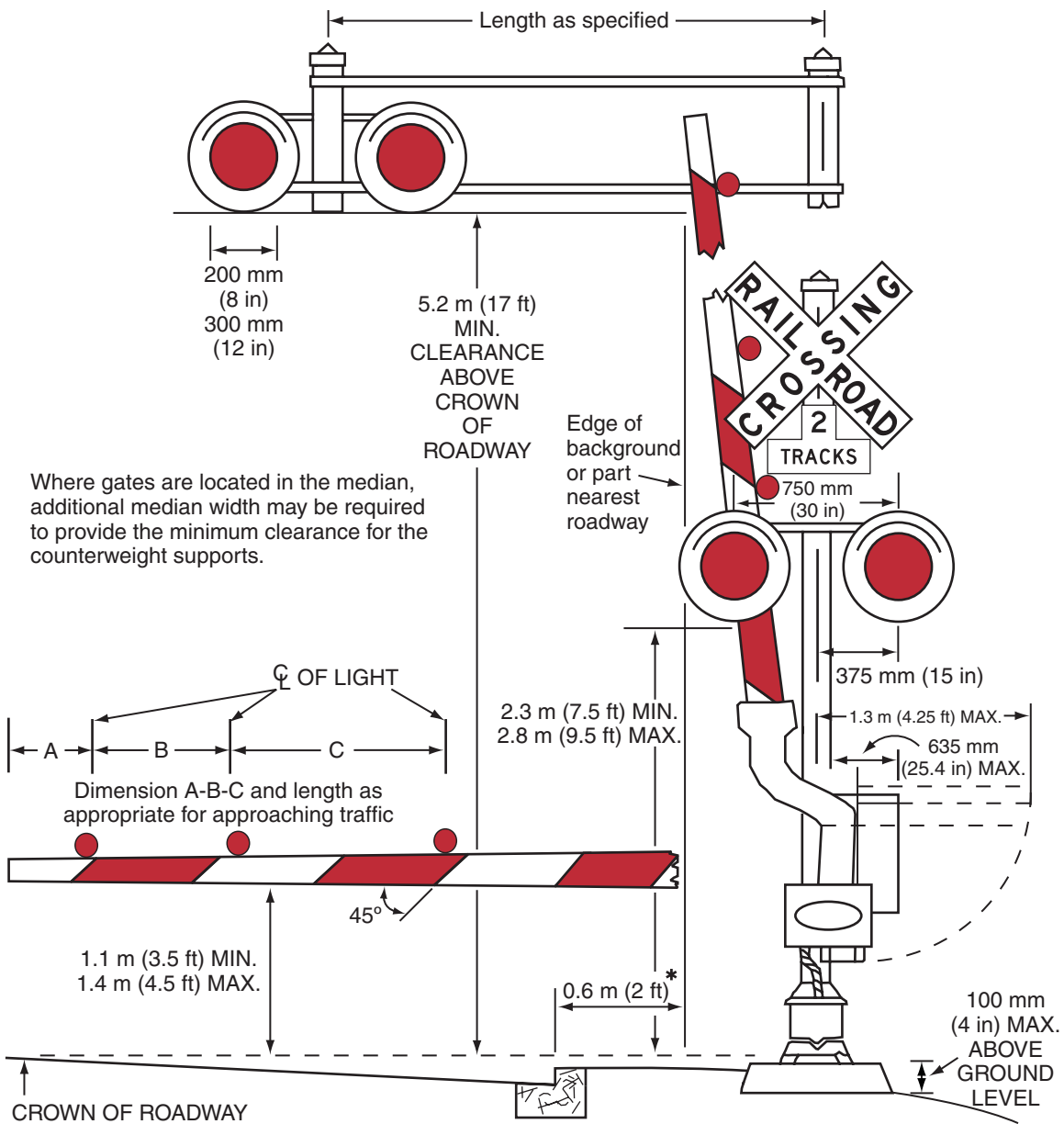
#### Option:

Bells or other audible warning devices may be included in the assembly and may be operated in conjunction with the flashing lights to provide additional warning for pedestrians and bicyclists.

#### Standard:

When indicating the approach or presence of a train, the flashing-light signal shall display toward approaching highway traffic two red lights mounted in a horizontal line flashing alternately.

**Figure 8D-1. Composite Drawing of Active Traffic Control Devices for Highway-Rail Grade Crossings Showing Clearances**



\* For locating this reference line at other than curb section installation, see Section 8D.01.

Flashing-light signals shall be placed to the right of approaching highway traffic on all highway approaches to a highway-rail grade crossing. They shall be located laterally with respect to the highway in conformance with Figure 8D-1 except where such location would adversely affect signal visibility.

At highway-rail grade crossings with highway traffic in both directions, back-to-back pairs of lights shall be placed on each side of the tracks. On multi-lane one-way streets and divided highways, flashing light signals shall be placed on the approach side of the highway-rail grade crossing on both sides of the roadway or shall be placed above the highway.

Each red signal unit in the flashing-light signal shall flash alternately. The number of flashes per minute for each lamp shall be 35 minimum and 65 maximum. Each lamp shall be illuminated approximately the same length of time. Total time of illumination of each pair of lamps shall be the entire operating time. Flashing-light units shall use either 200 mm (8 in) or 300 mm (12 in) nominal diameter lenses.

Guidance:

In choosing between the 200 mm (8 in) or 300 mm (12 in) nominal diameter lenses for use in highway-rail grade crossing flashing-light signals, consideration should be given to the principles stated in Section 4D.15.

**Standard:**

Highway-rail grade crossing flashing-light signals shall operate at a low voltage using storage batteries either as a primary or stand-by source of electrical energy. Provision shall be made to provide a source of energy for charging batteries.

Option:

Additional pairs of flashing-light units may be mounted on the same supporting post and directed toward vehicular traffic approaching the highway-rail grade crossing from other than the principal highway route, such as where there are approaching routes on highways closely adjacent to and parallel to the railroad.

### **Section 8D.03 Flashing-Light Signals, Overhead Structures**

Option:

Flashing-light signals may be installed on overhead structures or cantilevered supports as shown in Figure 8D-1 where needed for additional emphasis, or for better visibility to approaching traffic, particularly on multi-lane approaches or highways with profile restrictions.

If it is determined by an engineering study that one set of flashing lights on the cantilever arm is not sufficiently visible to road users, one or more additional sets of flashing lights may be mounted on the supporting post and/or on the cantilever arm.

**Standard:**

Breakaway or frangible bases shall not be used for overhead structures or cantilevered supports.

### **Section 8D.04 Automatic Gates**

Support:

An automatic gate is a traffic control device used as an adjunct to flashing-light signals.

**Standard:**

The automatic gate (see Figure 8D-1) shall consist of a drive mechanism and a fully retroreflectorized red- and white-striped gate arm with lights. When in the down position, the gate arm shall extend across the approaching lanes of highway traffic.

In the normal sequence of operation, unless constant warning time or other advanced system requires otherwise, the flashing-light signals and the lights on the gate arm (in its normal upright position) shall be activated immediately upon detection of the approaching train. The gate arm shall start its downward motion not less than 3 seconds after the flashing-light signals start to operate, shall reach its horizontal position at least 5 seconds before the arrival of the train, and shall remain in the down position as long as the train occupies the highway-rail grade crossing.

When the train clears the highway-rail grade crossing, and if no other train is detected, the gate arm shall ascend to its upright position, following which the flashing lights and the lights on the gate arm shall cease operation.

Gate arms shall be fully retroreflectorized on both sides, have 45-degree diagonal stripes alternately red and white at 400 mm (16 in) intervals measured horizontally, and shall have at least three red lights as indicated in Figure 8D-1.

**When activated, the gate arm light nearest the tip shall be illuminated continuously and the other lights shall flash alternately in unison with the flashing-light signals.**

**The entrance gate arm mechanism shall be designed to fail safe in the down position.**

Guidance:

The gate arm should ascend to its upright position in not more than 12 seconds.

In its normal upright position, when no train is approaching or occupying the highway-rail grade crossing, the gate arm should be either vertical or nearly so (see Figure 8D-1).

In the design of individual installations, consideration should be given to timing the operation of the gate arm to accommodate large and/or slow-moving vehicles.

The gates should cover the approaching highway to block all motor vehicles from being driven around the gate without crossing the centerline.

Option:

Automatic gate installations may include median islands between opposing lanes on an approach to a highway-rail grade crossing.

Where gates are located in the median, additional median width may be required to provide the minimum clearance for the counterweight supports.

## **Section 8D.05 Four-Quadrant Gate Systems**

Option:

Four-Quadrant Gate systems may be installed to improve safety at highway-rail grade crossings based on an engineering study when less restrictive measures, such as automatic gates and median islands, are not effective.

**Standard:**

**A Four-Quadrant Gate system shall consist of a series of automatic gates used as an adjunct to flashing-light signals to control traffic on all lanes entering and exiting the highway-rail grade crossing.**

**The Four-Quadrant Gate system shall consist of a drive mechanism and fully retroreflectorized red- and white-striped gate arms with lights, and when in the down position the gate arms extend individually across the entrance and exit lanes of highway traffic as shown in Figure 8D-2. Standards contained in Sections 8D.01 through 8D.03 for flashing-light signals shall be followed for signal specifications, location, and clearance distances.**

**In the normal sequence of operation, unless constant warning time or other advanced system requires otherwise, the flashing-light signals and the lights on the gate arms (in their normal upright positions) shall be activated immediately upon detection of the approaching train. The gate arms for the entrance lanes of traffic shall start their downward motion not less than 3 seconds after the flashing-light signals start to operate and shall reach their horizontal position at least 5 seconds before the arrival of the train. Exit gate arm activation and downward motion shall be based on detection or timing requirements established by an engineering study of the individual site. The gate arms shall remain in the down position as long as the train occupies the highway-rail grade crossing.**

**When the train clears the highway-rail grade crossing, and if no other train is detected, the gate arms shall ascend to their upright positions, following which the flashing lights and the lights on the gate arms shall cease operation.**

**Gate arm design, colors, and lighting requirements shall be in accordance with the Standards contained in Section 8D.04.**

**Except as noted in the Option below, the exit gate arm mechanism shall be designed to fail-safe in the up position.**

**At locations where gate arms are offset a sufficient distance for vehicles to drive between the entrance and exit gate arms, median islands shall be installed in accordance with the needs established by an engineering study.**

Guidance:

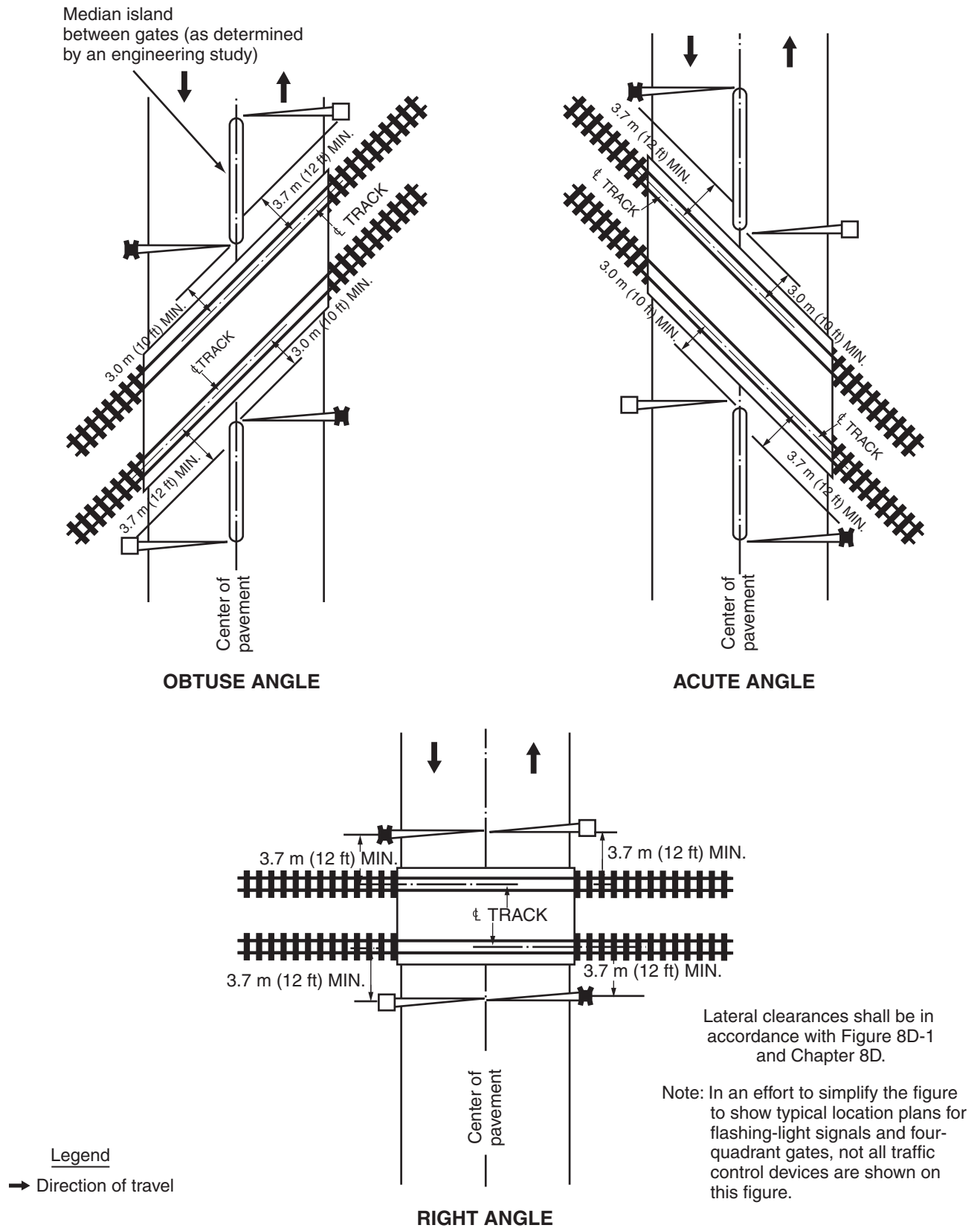
The gate arm should ascend to its upright position in not more than 12 seconds.

Four-Quadrant Gate systems should only be used in locations with constant-warning-time train detection.

The operating mode of the exit gates should be determined based upon an engineering study, with input from the affected railroad company.

If the Timed Exit Gate Operating Mode is used, the engineering study, with input from the affected railroad company, should also determine the Exit Gate Clearance Time (see Section 8A.01).

**Figure 8D-2. Example of Location Plan for Flashing-Light Signals and Four-Quadrant Gates**



If the Dynamic Exit Gate Operating Mode is used, vehicle intrusion detection devices should be installed to control exit gate operation based on vehicle presence within the minimum track clearance distance.

Regardless of which exit gate operating mode is used, the Exit Gate Clearance Time should be considered when determining additional time requirements for the Minimum Warning Time.

If a Four-Quadrant Gate system is used at a location that is adjacent to an intersection that could cause vehicles to queue within the minimum track clearance distance, the Dynamic Exit Gate Operating Mode should be used unless an engineering study indicates otherwise.

If a Four-Quadrant Gate system is interconnected with a highway traffic signal, backup or standby power should be considered for the highway traffic signal. Also, circuitry should be installed to prevent the highway traffic signal from leaving the track clearance green interval until all of the gates are lowered.

At locations where sufficient space is available, exit gates should be set back from the track a distance that provides a safety zone long enough to accommodate at least one design vehicle between the exit gate and the nearest rail.

Four-Quadrant Gate systems should include remote health (status) monitoring capable of automatically notifying railroad signal maintenance personnel when anomalies have occurred within the system.

Option:

Exit gate arms may fail in the down position if the highway-rail grade crossing is equipped with remote health (status) monitoring.

Four-Quadrant Gate installations may include median islands between opposing lanes on an approach to a highway-rail grade crossing.

Guidance:

Where sufficient space is available, median islands should be at least 18 m (60 ft) in length.

## **Section 8D.06 Train Detection**

**Standard:**

**The devices employed in active traffic control systems shall be actuated by some form of train detection.**

**Train detection circuits, insofar as practical, shall be designed on the fail-safe principle.**

**Flashing-light signals shall operate for at least 20 seconds before the arrival of any train, except as noted in the Option below.**

Option:

On tracks where all trains operate at less than 30 km/h (20 mph) and where flagging is performed by an employee on the ground, a shorter signal operating time for the flashing-light signals may be used.

Additional warning time may be provided when determined by an engineering study.

Guidance:

Where the speeds of different trains on a given track vary considerably under normal operation, special devices or circuits should be installed to provide reasonably uniform notice in advance of all train movements over the highway-rail grade crossing. Special control features should be used to eliminate the effects of station stops and switching operations within approach control circuits to prevent excessive activation of the traffic control devices while trains are stopped on or switching upon the approach track control circuits.

## **Section 8D.07 Traffic Control Signals at or Near Highway-Rail Grade Crossings**

Option:

Traffic control signals may be used instead of flashing-light signals to control road users at industrial highway-rail grade crossings and other places where train movements are very slow, such as in switching operations.

**Standard:**

**The appropriate provisions of Part 4 relating to traffic control signal design, installation, and operation shall be applicable where traffic control signals are used to control road users instead of flashing-light signals at highway-rail grade crossings.**

**Traffic control signals shall not be used instead of flashing-light signals to control road users at a mainline highway-rail grade crossing.**



**Guidance:**

The highway agency with jurisdiction, the regulatory agency with statutory authority, if applicable, and the railroad company should jointly determine the preemption operation at highway-rail grade crossings adjacent to signalized highway intersections.

If a highway-rail grade crossing is equipped with a flashing-light signal system and is located within 60 m (200 ft) of an intersection or midblock location controlled by a traffic control signal, the traffic control signal should be provided with preemption in accordance with Section 4D.13.

Coordination with the flashing-light signal system, queue detection, or other alternatives should be considered for traffic control signals located farther than 60 m (200 ft) from the highway-rail grade crossing. Factors to be considered should include traffic volumes, vehicle mix, vehicle and train approach speeds, frequency of trains, and queue lengths.

**Standard:**

**If preemption is provided, the normal sequence of traffic control signal indications shall be preempted upon the approach of trains to avoid entrapment of vehicles on the highway-rail grade crossing by conflicting aspects of the traffic control signals and the highway-rail grade crossing flashing-light signals.**

This preemption feature shall have an electrical circuit of the closed-circuit principle, or a supervised communication circuit between the control circuits of the highway-rail grade crossing warning system and the traffic control signal controller. The traffic control signal controller preemptor shall be activated via the supervised communication circuit or the electrical circuit that is normally energized by the control circuits of the highway-rail grade crossing warning system. The approach of a train to a highway-rail grade crossing shall de-energize the electrical circuit or activate the supervised communication circuit, which in turn shall activate the traffic control signal controller preemptor. This shall establish and maintain the preemption condition during the time the highway-rail grade crossing warning system is activated, except that when crossing gates exist, the preemption condition shall be maintained until the crossing gates are energized to start their upward movement. When multiple or successive preemptions occur, train activation shall receive first priority.

**Guidance:**

If a highway-rail grade crossing is located within 15 m (50 ft) (or within 23 m (75 ft) for a highway that is regularly used by multi-unit vehicles) of an intersection controlled by a traffic control signal, the use of pre-signals to control traffic approaching the grade crossing should be considered.

**Standard:**

**If used, the pre-signals shall display a red signal indication during the track clearance portion of a signal preemption sequence to prohibit additional vehicles from crossing the railroad track.**

**Guidance:**

Consideration should be given to using visibility-limited signal faces (see Section 4A.02) at the intersection for the downstream signal faces that control the approach that is equipped with pre-signals.

**Option:**

The pre-signal phase sequencing may be timed with an offset from the signalized intersection such that the railroad track area and the area between the railroad track and the downstream signalized intersection is generally kept clear of stopped vehicles.

**Standard:**

**If a pre-signal is installed at an interconnected highway-rail grade crossing near a signalized intersection, a STOP HERE ON RED (R10-6) sign shall be installed near the pre-signal or at the stop line if used. If there is a nearby signalized intersection with insufficient clear storage distance for a design vehicle, or the highway-rail grade crossing does not have gates, a NO TURN ON RED (R10-11) sign shall be installed for the approach that crosses the railroad track.**

**Option:**

At locations where a highway-rail grade crossing is located more than 15 m (50 ft) (or more than 23 m (75 ft) for a highway regularly used by multi-unit vehicles) from an intersection controlled by a traffic control signal, a pre-signal may be used if an engineering study determines a need.

If highway traffic signals must be located within close proximity to the flashing-light signal system, the highway traffic signals may be mounted on the same overhead structure as the flashing-light signals.

**Support:**

Section 4D.13 describes additional considerations regarding preemption of traffic control signals at or near highway-rail grade crossings.

